A · MAN · OF · THE · WORLD

ANNIE PAYSON CALL

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BY

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A MAN *of the* WORLD

I

THERE are two worlds in the minds of men: the one is artificial, selfish, and personal, the other is real and universal; the one is limited, material, essentially of the earth, the other supposes a kind of larger cosmopolitanism, and has no geographical limits at all; it is as wide as humanity itself, and only bounded by the capacity for experience, insight, and sympa-

thy in the mind and heart of man. A true man of the world, therefore, is not primarily of it, — a true man of the world must know and understand the world; and in order to do so, he should be able at any time to get it into perspective.

Charles Dickens says that by a man who knows the world is too frequently understood "a man who knows all the villains in it." It is of course, by gentlemen, also understood that a man who knows the world knows all its manners and customs, and can adapt himself to them easily and entirely, wherever he may be. But this ex-

ternal polish does not preclude the idea, even among so-called well-bred men, that a man who knows the world knows all the villains in it, and such a man may be more or less of a villain himself, provided he has the cleverness and the ingenuity to hide his villainy. To a certain extent the appearance of virtue has been always more or less of a necessity in the world, but the moral standards in social, professional, and business life are inconsistent and mixed. Even in essentials the highest standards are often modified to suit the preference of the majority. It is not always considered dishonorable for a

man to cheat in business, so long as the cheating is done without interfering in any way with the general customs of the business world.

When we say that a man of the world is generally understood to be a man who "knows all the villains in it," it seems at first sight an extreme statement, but as the world goes now, it certainly represents the general tendency of thought. The distinction is too seldom made between a man of the world and a worldly man, — between a man who really knows the world as it is and a man whose familiarity with it is narrow and sordid. When people

speak of "seeing life" they seldom mean seeing the best of it.

The same tendency toward perversion, as being the more interesting phase of life, is found among physicians and trained nurses. A good physician once told me, with pained indignation, that his students would go miles to see an abnormal growth of tumor, but not one of them would turn around to enjoy the mechanism of a healthy heart. And it is a well-known fact that many trained nurses will lose interest in a case the moment a patient begins to recover. "A splendid case of typhoid fever" is,

not a case in which the patient is throwing off the effects of the germ with wholesome promptness, but one in which the germ is doing its worst, — where the illness is extreme, and the delirium exciting. To be sure, in such a case, there is intense interest in taking all possible means, with promptness and decision, to save the patient's life ; but, if this were done only with a keen love of wholesomeness and normal health, the interest of the nurses and physicians would never wane until the patient had become strong and vigorous. If the standard of the best physical health were steadily before

the eyes of physician and nurse, and if both had a strong desire to bring the patient, as nearly as possible, up to their own high standard of health, there would be a very great difference in the atmosphere of sick rooms and hospitals. The work of physicians and nurses seems to be more often that of protection against disease than that of achievement of health; and the distinction, though at first sight it may seem a fine one, is nevertheless radical.

Note the parallel between this negative tendency toward health of body, and the same negative tendency in the

world toward health of soul. It is protection against the worst ravages of sin which is the moral aim of the majority of the world; not a striving toward a positive standard of healthy life for both soul and body. What is sin but disease of the soul? Sin is just as truly, just as practically, disease of the soul, as any form of known malady is disease of the body. If we could impress ourselves strongly with the fact that sin is disease, — disorder and abnormality, — it would be a radical step toward freedom from sin. By sin is meant every kind of selfishness, — whatever form it may take.

A Man of the World

A young friend, in speaking of a companion charming in his words and manners and most attractive because of his artistic temperament, but evidently loose in his ideas of morality, once expressed the opinion that it was "all right" to associate with this charming man, — enjoying all that was delightful in him and ignoring, so far as possible, all that was evidently bad.

"Could you ignore dirty nails, dirty ears, and a bad smell about your companion?" someone asked.

Whereupon the young man exclaimed, with an expression of su-

preme disgust, "How can you speak of such things, — of course I could not stay with him for five minutes!"

But he did not in the least associate the loose, light, unclean way of looking at human relations, with the same careless uncleanness as applied to the body. And yet, in reality, the one kind of uncleanness corresponds precisely to the other. In the one case the dirt is on the inside and is what we may call living dirt, because it is kept alive by the soul to which it is allowed to cling. In the other case the dirt is on the outside, and can be washed off with soap and water. Very

few so-called men or women of the world are willing to appear dirty and slovenly in their bodies, — but a great many are willing to be dirty and slovenly in their souls. A curious and significant fact it is, that often, when a man's nerves give way, even when his external habits have been most cleanly, or even fastidious, they may change entirely, and he may go about with spotted clothes, dirty hands, and a general slovenly appearance, whereas such external shiftlessness would have been impossible to him while his nerves were comparatively well and strong.

When such a man's nerves give way, so that he loses to some extent the external use of his will, the dirty habits of his mind appear in slovenly and dirty habits of body, because he has no longer the will-power to confine them to his private thoughts and feelings. The habits of his body become then a true expression of his state of mind.

We may prove the relation between sin and disease by tracing what might be called a mild sin to its logical extreme. Just as we may follow almost any disease in its development, until it causes the death of the body, if the

body is not protected from its growth, so we may follow any sin in its development to the death of the soul, if the soul is not similarly protected. All sin, when allowed to increase according to its own laws, is the destruction of both soul and body.

Macbeth's mind became diseased; and we may find many an Iago in our insane asylums to-day, for, with all his cleverness, no Iago can, in the long run, keep control of his mind if his selfish plans are frustrated. The loathsome diseases of the body which are liable to overtake a Don Juan may only be spoken of, or thought of, as a

means of removing the blindness of those who, from dwelling upon the sensations of the body, come to think of sin as pleasant. When their blindness is removed, the least touch of the sensuality which causes the disease will fill them with wholesome horror. It is wonderfully provided by the Creator that any sensation, which is selfishly indulged in, any sensation that a man remains in for its own sake, must lead first to satiety, — and then to worse than satiety and death. This is true both of all selfish sensations of the body and of all useless emotions of the mind. Our sensations and our

emotions must be obedient servants to a wholesome, vigorous love of usefulness, or they become infernal masters whose rule leads only to weakness and death.

The old asceticism, — the spiritual stupidity of primitive times, — placed the world, the flesh, and the devil on a level of equality, whereas both the world and the flesh are capable of noble uses, but the devil is not. The world and the flesh are servants, and good servants; they are necessary instruments for the carrying out of the Divine purpose in human life. But the devil is merely the perversion of good

things to useless, trivial, and degrading ends. He has no power in himself except as we give him power, and we give him power every day when we associate the idea of the world with that of the villains in it, and when we debase the flesh by not realizing the clean, good service for which it is intended. Indeed, we are really feeding the devil in so far as our standards of life are negative, and not positive, — in so far as we are only busy in protecting ourselves from worse sin or from worse disease, instead of casting out *all sin and disease* as fast as we perceive them in ourselves, and work-

ing toward the highest possible standard of wholesome life for body and soul. To "*look to the Lord and shun evils as sins*," means to hold to the standard of health given us by the Lord for both body and soul, so that it may become more and more clear as we apply it to life with persistent strength. Our present standards of life are warped. The abnormal has become so familiar to us as to seem normal. The joy and life-giving power of fresh air for soul and body is too little known to us. A thoroughly healthy world, with wholesome habits of mind and body, is almost out of our

ken. The lower standards have become too generally a matter of course, — that is why we do not think of brave and wholesome manhood when we use the expression "a man of the world."

It is a certain fact that no man can understand and live in what is good and wholesome, *of his own free will*, without having had temptations, — and strong ones, — to what is evil and unwholesome. Thus a knowledge of the evil in the world enlarges a man's experience just in so far as he uses that knowledge to lead him to the opposite good. A knowledge of evil warps a

man's character, — however broad his experience may be, — just in so far as he yields to the evil and allows it to become a part of himself.

"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." The truth which makes us free is the truth about ourselves, the truth about evil, the truth about everything, and our freedom is full and expansive in proportion as we recognize, acknowledge, and live by the truth, both in general and in detail.

II

"I AM a man and nothing human do I consider alien to me," said Terence two thousand years ago.

A man who thoroughly knows the world must be capable of understanding all phases of life, — not only those of his own country, class, profession, or sect. It is the humanity in all its phases that he loves and understands, — not the phase itself; and therefore nothing that is human can be so remote as to be unintelligible to his

mind or without the power of appeal to his heart. Iago could never understand honesty or generosity. Don Juan could never understand chastity. On the other hand it is possible for an honest man to understand Iago, and for a clean man to understand Don Juan. Although in neither case will the man who understands sympathize with the sin, in both cases the understanding will be clear and comprehensive. A child cannot understand either Iago or Don Juan, neither can a childish man; but a truly *childlike* man can understand all phases of temptation and sin, and estimate them justly.

There is an innocence of ignorance, and there is an innocence of wisdom. The innocence of ignorance is involuntary. It is innocence because it cannot be anything else. A little child is in the innocence of ignorance, and it is from that protective innocence that we feel the fresh, happy atmosphere of childhood. The innocence of wisdom is possible only to those who have known temptation and, through overcoming it, have learned to recognize all sin for what it really is, — the filth and disease of the soul, and to avoid it as such. The fresh life that springs from such struggle and con-

quest of selfish tendencies brings with it a vigor of innocence which has a quality of life akin to that of a healthy child, with the added power and insight of a man's maturity. Whatever form or phase of temptation his fellow men may be in, such a man, from his own experience, has found the means of understanding them. He has found the means of understanding his neighbor, whether the neighbor is immersed in self-indulgence, is struggling desperately to gain his freedom, or is well along upon the upward path.

A man who can only understand certain special phases of human nature

is narrow and provincial, however he may assume the air of a man of the world; and the false assumption of a broad understanding renders him practically still more narrow and provincial, for it stands in the way of his learning from those who have it in their power to instruct him. But the true man of the world, whose breadth of vision and penetration of insight are the result of a working familiarity with universal principles in practical life, detests sin without condemning the sinner, and is not befooled by the shallow pretensions of the provincial Pharisee.

A Man of the World

To know the world we must not only be able to understand all phases of it in general, but we must also understand the various types in particular. There are nations, there are grades and phases of life in each nation, and there are individuals in each phase. There is as great a difference between the individuals of a small community of people, if one has the eye to detect it, as there is between nations.

I remember once talking with a famous anthropologist. All men were to him simply representations of ages, nations, or families. No man was a

man in himself; he was simply a specimen. It gave to a little everyday person a very keen sense of the vastness of humanity in general, past and present, to hear this scientific man talk. He had the habit of swinging all the nations of the world into his conversation as easily as if he lived with them every day, as in his habitual thought he truly did. Whenever I would speak to him of a friend or a relative he would characterize him by his national and family tendency. To talk with the Professor for an hour or two was most enlightening and expanding; but a long acquaintance

proved that a man, even in the region of large anthropological and geographical ideas, could be just as narrow and provincial as the self-appointed moral censor of a country town. The human body and the human mind, in general, seemed to mean a very great deal to him, but man as an individual soul meant nothing at all.

Some of the greatest diplomats, who have stood out as clever in their dealings with nations, have been limited in the extreme when their lives took them outside of the rut of their own immediate work. Statesmen who have dealt cleverly

with nations have blundered sadly in their dealings with individual men, blundered sometimes when their mistakes would react upon their national influence. And yet so established were they in the selfish rut of their national diplomacy, so provincial were they in the knowledge of individual human nature, that they went on blundering, until many a time their mistakes led them almost, if not quite, to national disaster. The best lawyers know that to do their work truly they must be able to judge particular cases and special circumstances by standards which to the majority of

minds do not exist. For want of such clear understanding of human nature which comes from an original instinct for truth itself, — as distinguished from the cut-and-dried application of conventional habit, — lawyers have often failed.

Conventional standards are the common standards of the majority; but, although they are perhaps more serviceable than any others in the achievement of commonplace success, they are invariably inadequate on a really high and simple plane of human endeavor. It is rare to find an active man engaged in worldly business who

recognizes the laws of simple unselfishness and truth as having any practical existence in human affairs; but it is still more rare to find such a man understanding the true relation between essential goodness and the conventional principles of morality. There are times when those who act from higher standards must appear to contradict entirely all conventional modes of life, but they do not necessarily oppose such conventions, for through a courageous adherence to the spirit of the law they eventually bring new life to its letter. The true man of the world is he who can express his

essential goodness and truth in wise and appropriate ways, and in terms which must be, in the long run, intelligible to all kinds of men.

When Jesus Christ healed a man on the Sabbath day, He not only ignored the conventional standards of His nation, but He appeared to disobey one of the fundamental commandments of the law. The Pharisees, and all the people about Him who stood well in the eyes of the world, were angrily indignant. It is not difficult to imagine, after it was all over, a kind and conventional soul coming to the Lord and asking Him

why He had not waited until the next day before carrying out His intention; — He would not have had to wait long, and the displeasure of the Pharisees would have been avoided. "Would it not have been more charitable to respect the religious scruples of the Jews? Is it not wrong to fly needlessly in the face of respectable public opinion? Was it not unwise needlessly to break the letter of the commandment, even while keeping its spirit?" Some doubting soul, who wanted to believe in the goodness of the Lord and the purity of His motive, might well have put all these questions

to Him with a sincere and conscientious desire to serve. And yet this doubter, with all his conscientious kindness, would have been blind and stupid. For only the self-righteous or the morally stupid could fail to understand that, in healing a sick man on the Sabbath day, our Lord was establishing a new precedent of a truer and deeper obedience for all mankind. The Pharisees were convinced of their own goodness ; it would not have occurred to them as possible that they were narrow, provincial, and self-righteous. They would not have admitted for an instant the possibility of any circum-

stances under which it might be right to perform a radical cure on the Sabbath day; and they persuaded themselves that they were "doing God service" when they subjected to an ignominious execution the man who had so roused all their personal and selfish antagonism. The Pharisees were hopelessly unable to understand Him, but that was because of their own blindness. In laying down the principle that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, our Lord was expressing an eternal truth, not only to the world of His own time but to the world of all ages.

A Man of the World

To associate the idea of a man of the world with a knowledge of its dark places and shallow forms alone, tends to belittle and degrade our conception of the world; whereas the world, so far from being only dark or shallow, is well worth knowing and serving, provided it is made to serve, in its turn, all that is vigorous and wholesome in man. We should recognize the beauty and power of the things of this world as servants to our highest law; it is only the perversion of those things that is to be renounced.

The true man of the world under-

stands perverted human nature,—from the gourmand to the keen political sharper; he is a man who is never deceived by appearances, and who sees the real character beneath its external polish; a man who, with his clearer understanding, takes each perversion at its true value, understands the Iagos and the Don Juans equally well, with no slightest taste for either. They are all forms of disease to him. He can trace Iago's villainy to its own destruction and Don Juan's sensuality to its worse than satiety.

Again, a true man of the world is a man who knows, and loves, and is a

part of all the wholesomeness in the world; a man who is quickly at home in every variety of good form, because the instincts of a gentleman are the same all the world over, although customs may differ entirely; a man who, while accustomed to all conventions and respecting them where they properly belong, is easily and happily at home without them; a man who, while preferring fine instincts as well as strong characters in his fellow men, is so alive to the best in human nature that he can find the gold thread anywhere in the wax, if there is a gold thread there; a man whose thoughts

are so much at home in fresh air that he at once detects a close or tainted atmosphere, but can keep the unpleasant sensation to himself; who never intrudes his love of fresh air upon others, but, being surrounded by it himself, enjoys it habitually and as a matter of course. Such a man can never be caught unawares; he is a gentleman in all emergencies, because he cannot be otherwise than himself, and he never appears what he is not.

A true man of the world is not of the world primarily, although he serves the world and is served by it; it is to him always a means to a higher end,

— never an end in itself. It was of true men of the world that the Lord spoke when He said, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil!"

III

FROM the point of view of good we can see and understand evil, but from the point of view of evil we can neither see nor understand real goodness. A man to understand the world must be in the process of gaining his freedom from its evils. He must be learning to live according to universal and interior standards, not according to the standards of a special time, or of the people who happen to be about him; and, in the process, he

will learn that faithfulness to his own sincere perception of universal truth will lead him eventually into true harmony with the best in others. We know of only one man in the history of the world who lived his whole life in a manner consistent with his highest standards.

The world is a great, well-kept school. No one who believes in immortality can possibly doubt that the short space of time we are here is meant for training,—training to prepare us for our work hereafter, whatever that may be, by doing our work here well. If we start with the belief that the world is

a school, and that we do not want to stay in the primary class, but that we want to go through all the classes and to graduate honorably,—if that conviction is strong in our minds, it is astonishing to realize what a new aspect life will have for us. In general and in every detail life will be full of living interest. No trouble will be too hard to bear; there will be no circumstances that we would run away from. We shall want to learn all our lessons, to pass all our examinations, and to get the living power for use to others which is the logical result.

To love his neighbor as himself, a

man must be able truly to sympathize with his neighbor and to see through his neighbor's eyes. By this I do not mean that the neighbor's point of view must be his own, but that he should be able to understand it as if it were his own. If a man does this, he can understand the wrong or the right of it much more clearly; and can, when advisable, modify his own point of view according to his neighbor's. One can easily recognize the advantage it is to a doctor, a lawyer, a minister, or a business man, to be able and willing always to grasp the point of view of other people. A doctor makes up his

mind as to the best course to take in regard to his patient. The patient tells him a long story describing his own state of mind, which seems to the doctor, according to his own experience, entirely ridiculous. If he excludes all appreciation of his patient's point of view and holds harshly to his own ideas, he loses the most important means for performing a perfect cure. If he listens attentively, and earnestly tries to appreciate what may be good in his patient's ideas, so that the patient feels his sympathy, an opportunity is thus opened to lead the patient gradually to common sense. In so far as

the physician closes his mind to his patient's point of view, in so far he is narrow and lacking in the true spirit of a man of the world.

A good, clear-headed lawyer should understand not only his client's point of view, but also that of his opponent. A man can never lose his own ground by truly "throwing himself on the side of his antagonist." An all-round clear-headedness is a necessity to the best growth in us of true principles. When a man's eye is single his whole body will be full of light, and such light penetrates far and wide within and along the whole horizon, and

shows characters, affairs, and circumstances, for what they really are. But no man's eye can be single unless he takes a clear, unprejudiced view of his fellow men in all phases and varieties of life. The very large number and variety of people who come steadily for help to a physician or minister receive the greatest help when the physician or minister understands the world entirely without prejudice. A quiet understanding of human nature, and a brave, gentle manner of dealing with others is one of the greatest blessings that can come to any man.

It is absolutely impossible to rid

ourselves of prejudice without at the same time gaining freedom from self-love. If a man is favorably prejudiced in a certain direction, it is because there is something in the opposite direction which offends his selfishness. To gain freedom from the prejudice he must see and acknowledge heartily the self-ishness in himself which is at its root. This is often a difficult thing to do, for a prejudice may have come to us through the selfish egotism of some far-away ancestor, and may have be-come rooted in our own personality before we realized its true nature.

To be a man of the world one must

be able to understand the world, — not three or four corners of it, but the whole of it. This expansion of mind and soul is possible to every man who will first understand himself, and no man can understand himself who is blindly indulging his own selfishness. Every day we are seeing people who are living and acting in the grossest selfishness and they do not know it. Such people sometimes frighten those who are observing them.

"If John Smith," I say to myself, "is the human beast that I see him to be, and does not know it, perhaps I am unconsciously just as brutal as

John, and do not know it; and if I am, how can I find it out?"

We must have the habit of first casting the beam out of our own eye, before we can be ready to help take the mote from our brother's eye; and the only possible way to be sure of finding ourselves out, is to be quietly, willingly, open to criticism; to take every criticism, not with a desire to prove ourselves right, but with an earnest desire to find out and act upon the truth. I do not mean necessarily to invite criticism, — it will come fast enough without invitation, — but to welcome it when it appears, and to try

at once to see ourselves with the eyes of our critics.

So simple and straightforward is the road to travel, when we sincerely want to become true men of the world, that the expansion of heart and mind resulting from a steady walking upon this road must seem impossible to worldly men. And yet the narrowness of worldly men is in its essence similar to the narrowness of the dwellers in a small, gossiping country town. The worldly men have more superficial knowledge than the inhabitants of the country town, but they do not necessarily have any stronger grasp on the

world-wide principles of human nature. Worldliness is the love of ease and the pride of life upon a low plane of commonplace existence, but a true knowledge of the world requires a higher elevation.

The ascent of narrow paths and steep inclines leads to the mountain top; thence the outlook is wide, and the heights and depths of the landscape take their proper places in their true relation to each other. The single-minded drudgery and toil which produces character leads also to the wisdom of the seer. Only from the point of view of unselfish love and

truth can we get a well-balanced and extended view of the heights and depths and commonplaces of the world.

We have seen that a man, to know the world, must know and understand its individuals and types. We have seen that it is out of the question to understand other individuals, so long as we are clogged by our own selfishness or prejudice. We know that, to understand the point of view of another person, we must be clear, open-minded, and well grounded in true principles. We cannot understand another person's point of view truly when we are swayed and blinded

by its influence, so that it sweeps us off our feet and takes possession of us in spite of ourselves. We must have true standards to judge others by, and those must be standards which we have tried and proved, over and over, for ourselves.

At once the most interesting and the most profitable character-study in the world is the life of the one man whose life was consistently faithful to a standard which was universally true and all His own, and that standard He has given us for ours. Many of us fail in our interpretation of it, but, if we work diligently to try it

and to prove it, and are openly willing and glad to acknowledge whenever we have misinterpreted it, we shall be steadily enlightened as to its true meaning.

The delight of applying the laws of science and of seeing them work, the positive joy of watching the certain result of a well-managed scientific experiment is known to many a chemist or electrician. But the joy of testing the practical working of spiritual laws should be deeper, and more quiet, and more expanding than all other delights; for the spiritual law, if it exists at all, must underlie all material law.

Just as our problems in chemistry or in physics must fail over and over before we have the quiet satisfaction of seeing them work, so must we go through test after test before we can be firmly established in all the laws of human relations.

The standard of character and life represented by the idea of the man of the world has been dwarfed by a superficial notion of the meaning of "the world." "The world" means many things to many men, and these different meanings are of various degrees of truth and falsehood; but we shall find that, generally speaking,

L. OF C.

they are more and more true in proportion as the people who hold them are possessed of vigorous character. In art and literature we know that the greatest truth and the deepest beauty is that which appeals at all times to all men. It appeals to the universal human heart and mind, and thus it is inconceivable that the human race should ever tire of Shakespere, or Dante, or the Bible. Such books, whatever personal opinions or beliefs we may attach to them, are universally acceptable to all men, because they appeal to common human experience and apply the principles of

irresistible human logic. They are the books of the world.

The world itself is an organism corresponding to that of the individual man, and the particular individual whose heart and mind lives and thinks most nearly in harmony with the best life and thought of the world is its truest citizen. On the other hand, the individual whose motives and interests in life are confined to the narrowest circle of experience represents the extreme type of provincialism. The difference between these two extremes is not a matter of long, varied, or conventional experience, but of ex-

perience in those elements of human nature which are at its root and not at its surface. The statesman, the capitalist, the experienced traveller, although they may have intercourse with men in large classes and masses, may be essentially petty in the foundations of their character. These, then, are not men of the world in the true sense; for, if they were, we should have to mean by "the world" numerical or mechanical conceptions of men, purely intellectual conceptions of their thoughts, or geographical ideas regarding the inhabitants of the earth's surface. None of these things has any

universal quality, unless it is united to the power of human character and passion, which carries weight with all men at all times and in all places. The inhabitant of a country village may be, according to his quality, either a man of the village or a man of the world. It depends upon his breadth of mind, his largeness of heart, and the depth to which his character will absorb the best results of his experience. Whatever is purely local, without being rooted in a general human need, — whatever is purely personal, without being founded on a universal human principle, — whatever is purely

sectarian or national, or pertaining to a class or particular clique of persons, without being rooted in the same general human interests and laws, must, to that extent, be petty, provincial, trivial, and comparatively useless. Character is, and always has been, the motive power of the world; and only through finding his own development of character in the service of the world can the individual man find his appointed place as its citizen. There is no law higher than that which is human, in the sense that it is the only guide to the growth of what is best in human life. This essential

human law,—which is so different from that which worldly self-interest has organized for its own protection,—is that which man derives from the Divine. It is the world as made and sustained by the heart and mind of God of which man must be the citizen, and only as such is he truly "a Man of the World."

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